

Image and Word

INDIAN PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS
AND CALLIGRAPHY

(1350-1830)

IMAGE AND WORD: INDIAN PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS AND CALLIGRAPHY (1350-1830)



ART GALLERY OF GREATER VICTORIA
1040 MOSS STREET • VICTORIA • BC V8V 4P1 • CANADA



13020025

Indian Paintings, Drawings

\$3.00

AGGV

Image and Word
INDIAN PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS
AND CALLIGRAPHY
(1350-1830)

Historical Introduction BARRY TILL

Mughal Paintings HELEN DELACRETAZ

Label Entries CHENEY COWLES



ART GALLERY OF GREATER VICTORIA
1998

*Mots et images, peintures,
dessins et calligraphie de l'Inde
(1350 – 1830)*



U 13^e SIÈCLE, l'Empire musulman turc, connu sous le nom de sultanat de Delhi (1206 – 1526), a été établi dans le nord de l'Inde. Le Coran et d'autres scripts en langue arabe ont été apportés de régions islamiques de l'Ouest et copiés par des artistes indiens.

Au début du 16^e siècle, les musulmans de Fergana, sous la gouverne de Babur (1483 – 1530), sont partis à la conquête de l'Inde et ont fondé l'Empire moghol. (Le mot «moghol» est une déformation du mot «mongol»). Babur et ses successeurs Humayun (1530 – 1556), Akbar (1556 – 1605), Jahangir (1605 – 1627), Shah Jahan (1628 – 1658) et Aurangzeb (1658 – 1707) ont fait de cette région une merveille.

Les peintres persans ont rallié les rangs des ateliers impériaux, qui étaient supervisés par les empereurs, et ont travaillé avec les artistes indiens dont l'art s'inspirait fortement de la nature. En unissant leurs techniques, ils ont créé un superbe style connu sous le nom de miniatures mogholes, lequel se distingue de l'art islamique des Persans et de la peinture traditionnelle d'autres régions de l'Inde. En outre, les empereurs avaient des collections d'oeuvres d'art provenant d'Europe et ils encourageaient leurs artistes à intégrer les concepts et les techniques des artistes européens à leurs propres créations. Les artistes aimaient particulièrement illustrer des scènes guerrières, des scènes de chasse, des scènes d'audiences publiques ainsi que des scènes représentant des moments historiques méticuleusement reproduits de la vie des empereurs et des portraits posthumes des empereurs moghols.

L'apogée de la peinture moghole (1580 – 1650) a été marquée par des portraits impériaux grandioses, des scènes d'héroïsme passionné et de romantisme lyrique. Les mécènes Akbar et Jahangir, en particulier, s'élèvent au rang des plus valeureux défenseurs des arts de tous les temps. Les oeuvres de leurs artistes méritent d'ailleurs tout autant de considération.

La calligraphie musulmane, particulièrement celle du Coran, est considérée comme la plus haute forme d'expression artistique. D'ailleurs, les calligraphes islamiques venaient au sommet de la gent artistique. Le magnifique style *nastaliq* de calligraphie était très prisé à la cour impériale moghole.

The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria has presented a large number of Asian art exhibitions and publications on China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, and Southeast Asia over its fifty-four year existence. While the Art Gallery has generated a number of exhibitions dealing with India, this marks our first publication in the field. These paintings, drawings and calligraphy illustrations from the 14th to 19th centuries represent a golden age of Indian art.

Grateful thanks are due to the owners of this marvellous collection of Indian paintings, drawings and calligraphy, who have put their works of art and their photography at the disposal of the staff of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, thus making this exhibition and publication possible.

Thanks must go to Curator of Asian Art, Barry Till, for the historical introduction; to University of Victoria Graduate, Helen Delacretaz, for her essay on Mughal paintings; and to Cheney Cowles for the label entries with assistance from Dr. Kathy Benkaim and Terence McInerney. We are grateful to Gislaine Coulombe and Johanne Juteau of the French Translation Department of the Hongkong Bank of Canada for the French translation of the summary. We should also like to thank the following Art Gallery staff for their assistance: Mary Patten, Ann Tighe, Chris Russell and Jay Heins.

This project was made possible by funds generously provided by the Museum Assistance Programme of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Patricia E. Bovey
Director, AGGV, October 1998



3
Hindu ascetics
by a fire

Copyright © 1998 Art Gallery of Greater Victoria

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Till, Barry
Image and word

Includes summary in French.
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-88885-169-3

1. Art, Mogul. I. Delacretaz, Helen, 1970- II. Cowles, Cheney. III. Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. IV. Title.
N7303.T54 1998 759.954 C98-911039-7

FRONT COVER 10 Jahangir with a falcon

BACK COVER 6 Persian youth holding an arrow

Published by

ART GALLERY OF GREATER VICTORIA
1040 Moss Street, Victoria
BC V8V 4P1 Canada

Designed and printed in Canada by

MORRIS PRINTING COMPANY LTD.
Victoria, British Columbia

Image and Word

INDIAN PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS AND CALLIGRAPHY

(1350-1830)

Historical Introduction BARRY TILL



ISLAMIC HISTORY begins in 610 CE when the message of Islam was first revealed to Muhammad the Prophet by the angel Gabriel. The Muslim system of dating begins with the Prophet departing Mecca for Medina in 622. The religion spread so rapidly that by 712 Moslem conquerors were making their first appearance at the edges of India, first at Sind and then at the Punjab in 775. Moslem armies came to the Indian subcontinent to stay in the late 12th century. Over the next few centuries they gradually penetrated India starting in the north and overrunning one Hindu kingdom after another in the south. In the early 13th century, Turkish Muslim rule was established in Delhi by Aibak, the first sultan of India. The Muslim sultans who ruled from Delhi were known as the Delhi Sultanates (1206 – 1526). The court at Delhi, both of Turkish and Afghan descent, kept aloof from the indigenous Hindu population. In the early years of the Delhi Sultanates, the *Qur'an* and other books in Arabic script were brought in from other Islamic lands to the west. The sultans were aware of illustrated Persian (Iranian) manuscripts and had them copied as closely as possible by available provincial Indian artists. Some Persian artists did come to India, but most of the works of art appear to have been done by local copiers. The artists had to rely on models from other places since the Muslim religion was without roots in India. It wasn't until the mid-14th century that the artworks began to show local distinctions. In 1398 Delhi was badly pillaged by none other than the hordes of the Turko-Mongolian conqueror, Timur, or Tamberlane. The following year he departed and his family would not be seen for another century when they came back to stay. The period of the Delhi Sultanates, although very turbulent, did have a profound influence on Indian art, particularly in architecture.

In the early 16th century, a minor Timurid prince named Babur (1483 – 1530), inherited the Kingdom of Ferghana, but was pushed out of his homeland by more powerful adversaries. In 1526, he led his army triumphantly into Kabul, in present-day Afghanistan, and southward into India, where he established the Mughal Empire, which would, under the next few rulers, become a land of wondrous luxury and a powerful empire which extended to almost all of India and modern Pakistan as well as the eastern part of Afghanistan and was truly a golden age for India.

Babur was a sixth generation descendant of the great conqueror Timur (1336 – 1405) on his father's side, while his mother's side claimed ancestry back to the mighty Mongol leader Genghis Khan (1162 – 1227). The word "Mughal" is a corruption of the name "Mongol."

From his memoirs we know Babur was acquainted with the magnificence of Persian art and appreciated fine paintings, in particular the art of the Herat masters, Bihzad and Shah Musavvia, but was too preoccupied with war and survival to develop a greater interest in the arts. He was an exceptional poet and fond of laying out gardens. His son and successor, Humayun (r. 1530 – 56), was driven out of India for about fifteen years by an Afghan noble known as Sher Shah and had for a time to take refuge with only a band of forty followers in the Persian court of Shah Tahmasp, who would later assist him militarily. It was there that he

fell in love with miniature painting, and when he returned victoriously to India to regain his throne, he brought with him two exceptionally talented Persian artists, Khwaja Abd us-samed and Mir Sayyid Ali. A large number of Indian artists joined the Imperial atelier and became skilled painters under the tutelage of these two royal Safavid masters. With Imperial encouragement from Humayun and his successors, the Mughal style of painting was created and flourished. It started out completely harnessed to the Persian style, but as time went on it was increasingly diluted by the introduction of local Indian and European art concepts and developed its own identity. Mughal art was in fact the product of Imperial patronage and each Mughal patron cultivated his own distinctive sensibilities as well as his own set of rules governing style, which were different from the art of other contemporary Islamic nations. In particular, they preferred a higher degree of naturalism. The art of the Mughal era was tied more to the personalities of the patrons than that of the artists.

During the zenith of its power from the mid-16th to the early 18th century, the Mughal dynasty was ruled by four powerful emperors, Akbar (r. 1556 – 1605), Jahangir (r. 1605 – 1627), Shah Jehan (r. 1628 – 1658) and Aurangzeb (r. 1658 – 1707). Akbar succeeded his father to the throne as a mere boy of thirteen. However, his son, Jahangir was impatient to take power and rebelled. It was a pattern repeated by Jahangir's son, Shah Jahan and in turn by his son, Aurangzeb.

The first three monarchs were men of great calibre and were incredible statesmen. They were builders of magnificent gardens and great architectural masterpieces with bold engineering, munificent patrons and connoisseurs of the arts with huge libraries and painting collections, outstanding sportsmen, and were well informed and able to discuss ethics, compose poetry and understand music. While contemporary Europe of the 17th century was suffering from religious persecutions, these Mughal emperors were displaying extraordinary tolerance to other religions.

Akbar, a contemporary of Elizabeth of England, was a great humanitarian with a remarkable sense of fairness for all. His character and ability was superior to all rulers of his era, and he must rank as one of the greatest sovereigns in world history. He expanded his power in all directions and set up the greatest of all Indian empires. Akbar had an enlightened religious temperament and actively sought religious truth and studied religious practices outside the Islamic faith. His spiritual and intellectual curiosity and conciliatory ideals won him the confidence and support of the Rajput princes and Hindu chiefs, who became strong defenders of the Mughal empire and contentment prevailed under his rule. He worked to create a religious philosophy which embodied and reconciled the best aspects of Islam, the indigenous Indian beliefs and Christianity.

Akbar was a great initiator of the imperial style of painting and calligraphy even though he was essentially illiterate. During his reign he brought in artists from other parts of the Moslem world and set up an Imperial atelier or workshop. Under him the various styles were synthesized into the Mughal style. He visited his ateliers every week and offered incentives to the painters for exceptional works. Some paintings were made by two or three artists in a collective effort. Surprisingly most of his court painters were not Persians but Hindu painters trained in the Gujarati school of painting, as Akbar preferred their sensitive naturalistic renderings. He also assembled a collection of paintings and engravings from Italy, Holland, France and England, which were brought to his court by missionaries, notably the Jesuit Fathers, and adventurers, as well as through his contacts with the Portuguese who had installed themselves at Goa on the west coast of India. His court artists were quick to assimilate the European aesthetics and ideas of perspective, shading, light, volume and texture into their paintings. These various styles blended together made the Mughal style quite distinct from the Islamic art of the Persians and other Indian traditions of painting. The most important themes for these lavish illustrations were battle scenes, hunting scenes, formal audience scenes as well as meticulously recorded biographical key moments in the lives of the emperors and posthumous portrayals of Mughal emperors. Like official photographers, painters would accompany the emperors on their various excursions and make truly intimate works. Since the Mughals were strangers in India, they felt compelled to

establish their pedigree from the locals in their art. Akbar encouraged his courtiers to also commission painters to make portraits and copy illustrated manuscripts.

Jahangir, in spite of his vices of drink and opium, followed his father's example and included Hindu as well as Muslim holy men as his spiritual advisers. He inherited the imperial artistic establishment from his father and his patronage of the arts made a great contribution to Indian art, most notably the genre of portraiture excelled and reached unrivalled heights during his reign. His painters depicted not only grand people but also the humble. Jahangir was particularly fond of portraiture because he believed the depictions could reveal the inner essence of the person. He sent portrait artists to his enemies and rivals, so he could get an impression of his adversaries. Jahangir, a noted naturalist, also commissioned pictures of animals and plants. He enthusiastically supported all kinds of artistic activity and was extremely demanding for meticulous physical accuracy. Jahangir was less inclined to commission book illustrations and more interested in paintings representing his life and realistic studies of plants and animals. He brought into his court skilled artists from Persia and Europe. Jahangir was a great connoisseur and even boasted he could distinguish which painting was by which court artist through their brushwork. He was intimately involved with his artists' work and bound the finest calligraphies and miniature paintings into elaborate albums. He also had a collection of Dutch engravings by Dürer, Rottenhammer and Beham.

Jahangir's son and successor, Shah Jehan, was the builder of one of the world's greatest buildings, the Taj Mahal mausoleum, which was constructed for his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal. Even though Shah Jahan's greatest passion was for architecture, Mughal paintings during his reign were extremely elegant and show an increased technical finesse as well as exhibiting more European influences. He liked depictions of animals alone or fighting and being hunted, and bird and flower paintings. The artists of Shah Jahan's atelier were different from their predecessors in that instead of trying to record the outward appearance, they tried to present an idealized or improved image of their subject. The paintings of his time often display richly decorated textiles, simmering marbles and sparkling gems.

Shah Jahan's extravagance for architecture would exhaust the treasury and would contribute to his downfall. After deposing and imprisoning his father for eight years in the fort at Agra and after disposing of his brothers who were rivals for the throne, Aurangzeb seized power. Under this last of the powerful Mughal rulers, painting languished, for this emperor was a fanatical Moslem zealot whose puritanical iconoclasm curtailed the extravagant luxuries of his father's court and brought about the persecution of artists and their families, temporarily eliminating the Mughal school of painting. To strict orthodox Muslims, figure painting was blasphemy for it takes away the life-giving functions, which God alone can provide. Aurangzeb would only tolerate painters for political purposes such as the creators of official portraits. The dismissed artists dispersed and found employment with the local Mughal aristocracy and in provincial centres with Indian princes. Most notable of these were the Rajput princes, who were either in alliance or in opposition to the Mughals. Even before these artists arrived, the Rajput school of painting had developed and flourished, independent of the Mughal court. The princes protected the refugee artists who came into their domains and supported the creation of their works of art which were similar in style to the ones they produced for the Mughals. However, the subject matter became quite different. Instead of depicting Mughal life and Moslem themes, the artists began illustrating scenes from mystic poems and the great Indian epics like the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and others. Many of the Hindu courts of Rajasthan and the Pahari Hills had large and impressive libraries and painting collections, and were more brilliant than the later Mughal paintings.

The Mughal empire began to disintegrate rapidly after Aurangzeb's death in 1707 due to religious conflicts between the Muslim Mughals and the indigenous Hindu population largely caused by Aurangzeb's intolerance, court intrigues, external pressure from their powerful Persian rival and neighbour, and the arrival of the British who, under the guise of the British East India Trading Company, were expanding their empire in Asia. After Aurangzeb's departure from the scene, Mughal style miniatures continued to be produced and did enjoy two minor transient revivals in the 18th century. Although there were Mughal Emperors right up

to the time of the Indian Mutiny, they held little power. With the exiling of the last token Mughal emperor to Burma in 1858, India would become part of the British Empire. Artists in some areas of India produced pictures in the Mughal style for the British, who became the new patrons of Mughal artists. The "Company" pictures, so named after the trading company, often portrayed the various occupations and scenes from Indian literature. By the 18th century and during much of the 19th, European residents in India were displaying a keen interest in the natural history of the country and commissioned large numbers paintings and drawings of the flora and fauna of India.

The fall of the Mughal Empire saw the decline of their miniatures and calligraphy. Many Mughal paintings were collected by wealthy connoisseurs and others were collected by British officials during the colonial era.

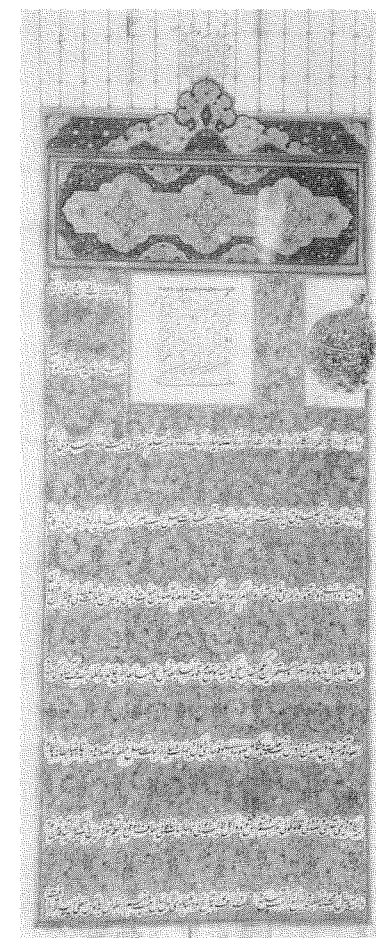
Rembrandt was one of the first Europeans to appreciate Mughal art. He was known to have a collection of miniatures and they had some influence on a few of his works of art. Schellinks, a contemporary of Rembrandt, also exhibits some Mughal artistic influences in his art.

Islamic Calligraphy

The *Qu'ran* is considered the visual manifestation of God's words. It is a cherished task for a calligrapher to copy its text and it has been said the pen is the Beacon of Islam. The writing or reciting of the *Qu'ran* is a central feature of Muslim life and according to the Prophet Muhammad to recreate or copy the word of God was a task of religious merit. The calligraphy of the *Qu'ran* is believed to be the highest level of artistic expression. Islamic calligraphers were esteemed above all other artists and craftsmen and received honours greater than most skilled painters. Calligraphy dealing with the *Qu'ran* was prized and used to adorn almost every imaginable surface in the Islamic world, from paper, parchment and textiles to decorative objects of metalwork and ceramics, as well as architecture. Islamic works of literature, science and history were illustrated but the *Qu'ran* and other scriptures were never illustrated.

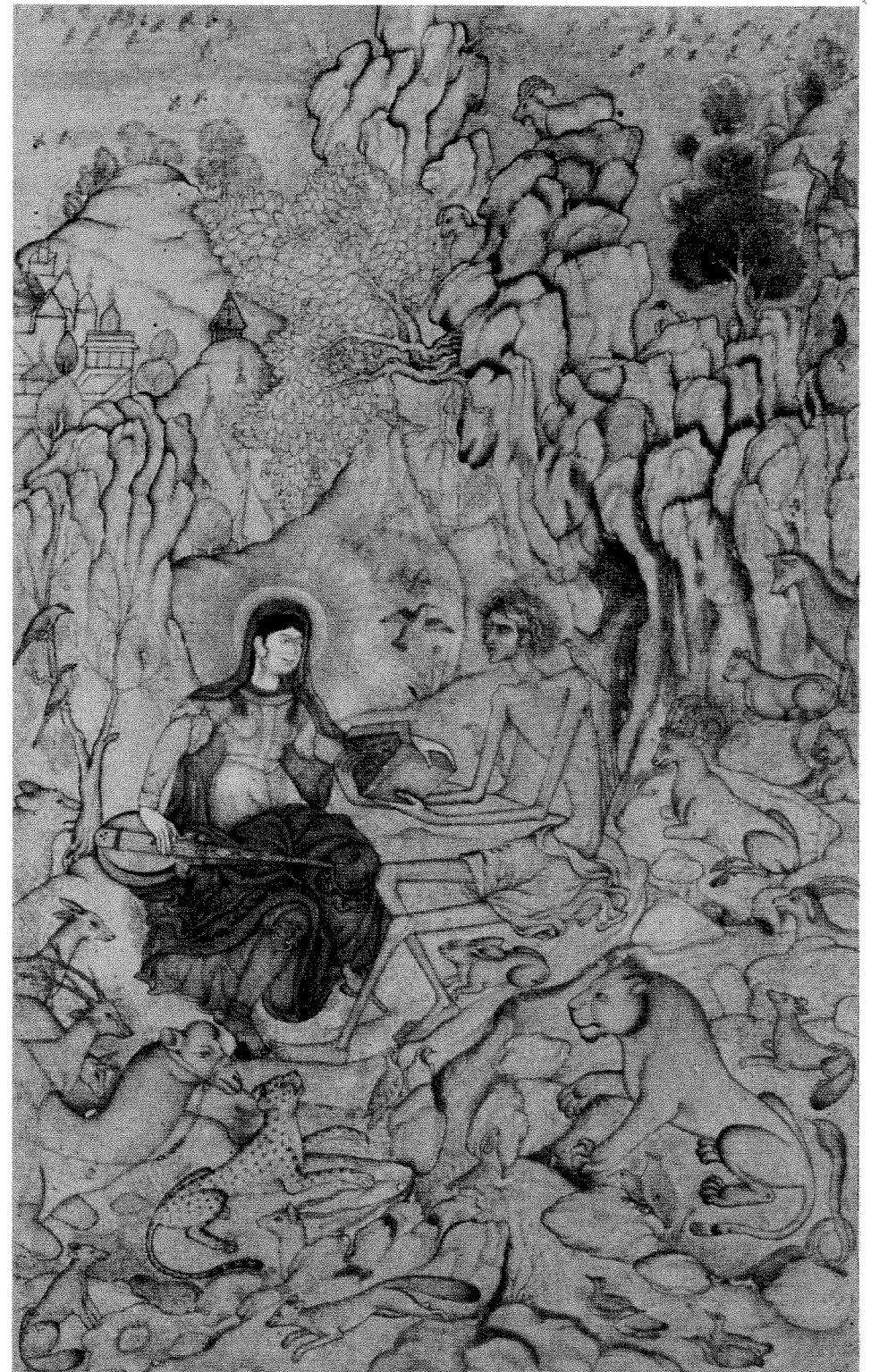
Kufic script, an angular style of script, was the oldest of the Arabic calligraphy styles. From the 7th until the 12th century, it continued to evolve in style. The other principal script, a round cursive script known as Naskhi developed in the 10th century and became popular from the 12th century on in most Islamic countries except for north Africa and Spain, where the Maghrib script was used.

In the late 14th century, the magnificent *nastaliq* style was created in Persia and spread to other Islamic nations. By the 16th century it had spread to Turkey and then to Mughal India, where it enjoyed much success at the imperial court.



Selected Bibliography for the three authors

- Archer, Mildred. *Company Paintings, Indian Paintings of the British Period*, London, 1992.
- Beach, Milo C. *The Grand Mogul: Imperial Painting in India, 1600-1660*. Williamstown, 1978; *The Imperial Image: Paintings for the Mughal Court*. Washington, DC, 1981.
- Binney, E. C., 3rd. *Persian and Indian Miniatures from the Collection of E. C. Binney 3rd*, Portland, 1962.
- Brand, Michael and Glenn D. Lowry. *Akbar's India Art from the Mughal City of Victory*. London, 1985.
- Canby, Sheila. "Mughal Painting, Princes and Potentates," *Arts of Asia*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1998.
- Delacretaz, Helen. *Mughal India and the Religious Image: The Influence of European Christian Prints on Mughal Miniatures, 1580-1627*. University of Victoria Masters Dissertation, 1997.
- Dimand, M. S. *A Handbook of Muhammandan Art*. New York, 1958.
- Gascoigne, Bamber. *The Great Moghuls*. London, 1971.
- Hajek, Lubor. *Indian Miniatures of the Moghul School*. London, 1960.
- James, David. *Qu'rans of the Mamluks*. London 1988.
- Leach, Linda York. *Mughal and Other Indian Paintings from the Chester Beatty Library*. London, 1995.
- MacLagan, Edward. *The Jesuits and the Great Mogul*. New York, 1972.
- Okada, Amina. *Indian Miniatures of the Mughal Court*. Translated by Deke Dusinberre. Paris: 1992.
- Pal, Pratapaditya et al. *Romance of the Taj Mahal*. Los Angeles, 1989.
- Pedersen, Johannes. *The Arabic Book*. Princeton, 1984.
- Pozzi, Jean. *Indian Painting at the Time of the Grand Moguls*. Paris, 1950.
- Richards, John F. *The Mughal Empire*. Cambridge, 1993.
- Rogers, J. Michael. *Mughal Miniatures*. New York, 1993.*
- Skelton, Robert et al. *The Indian Heritage, Court Life and Arts under Mughal Rule*. London, 1982.
- Welch, Anthony. *Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World*. Auston and London, 1979; "Islamic Calligraphy, The Pen is the Beacon of Islam," *Orientalism*, Vol. 15, No. 8, 1984.
- Welch, Anthony & Welch, Stuart Cary. *Arts of the Islamic Book*. Ithaca and London, 1982.
- Welch, Stuart Cary. *The Art of Mughal India: Painting and Precious Objects*. New York, 1963; *A Flower From Every Meadow*. New York, 1973; *Imperial Mughal Painting*. New York, 1978; *Wonders of the Age, Masterpieces of Early Savafid Painting, 1501-1576*. Harvard, 1979.
- Welch Stuart Cary et al. *The Emperor's Album, Images of Mughal India*. New York, 1988.
- Zebrowski, Mark. *Deccani Painting*, Stanford, 1983.
- various. *The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*. Harper & Row, 1989; *Pages of Perfection: Islamic Paintings and Calligraphy from the Russian Academy of Sciences*. ARCH Foundation, 1995.

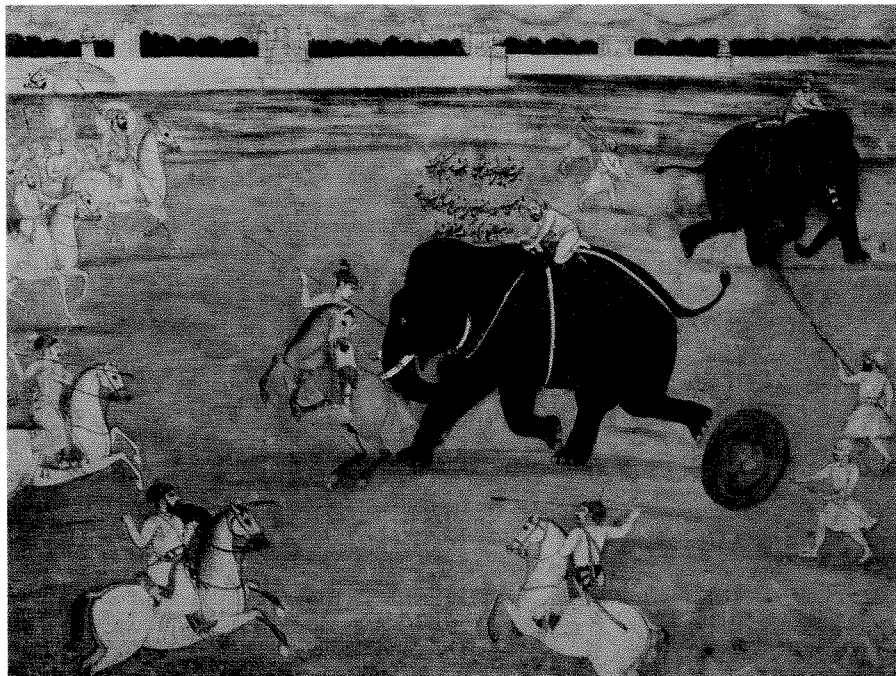




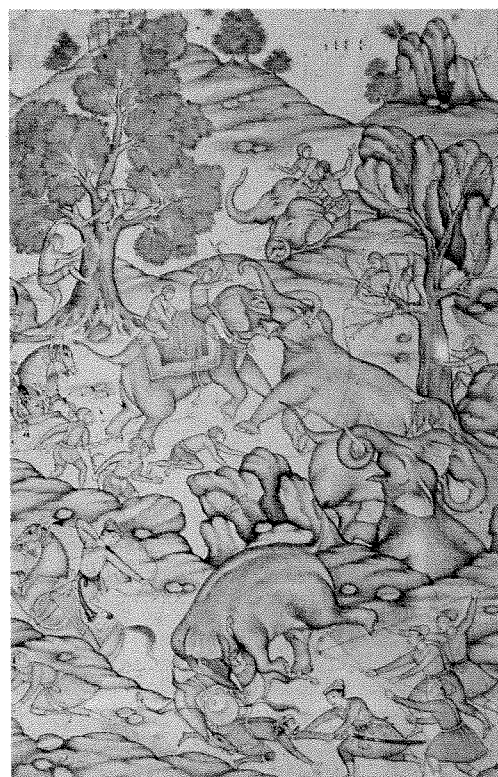
2 Illustration from the *Akbar-Nama*



4 Demons banqueting in a fantastic landscape

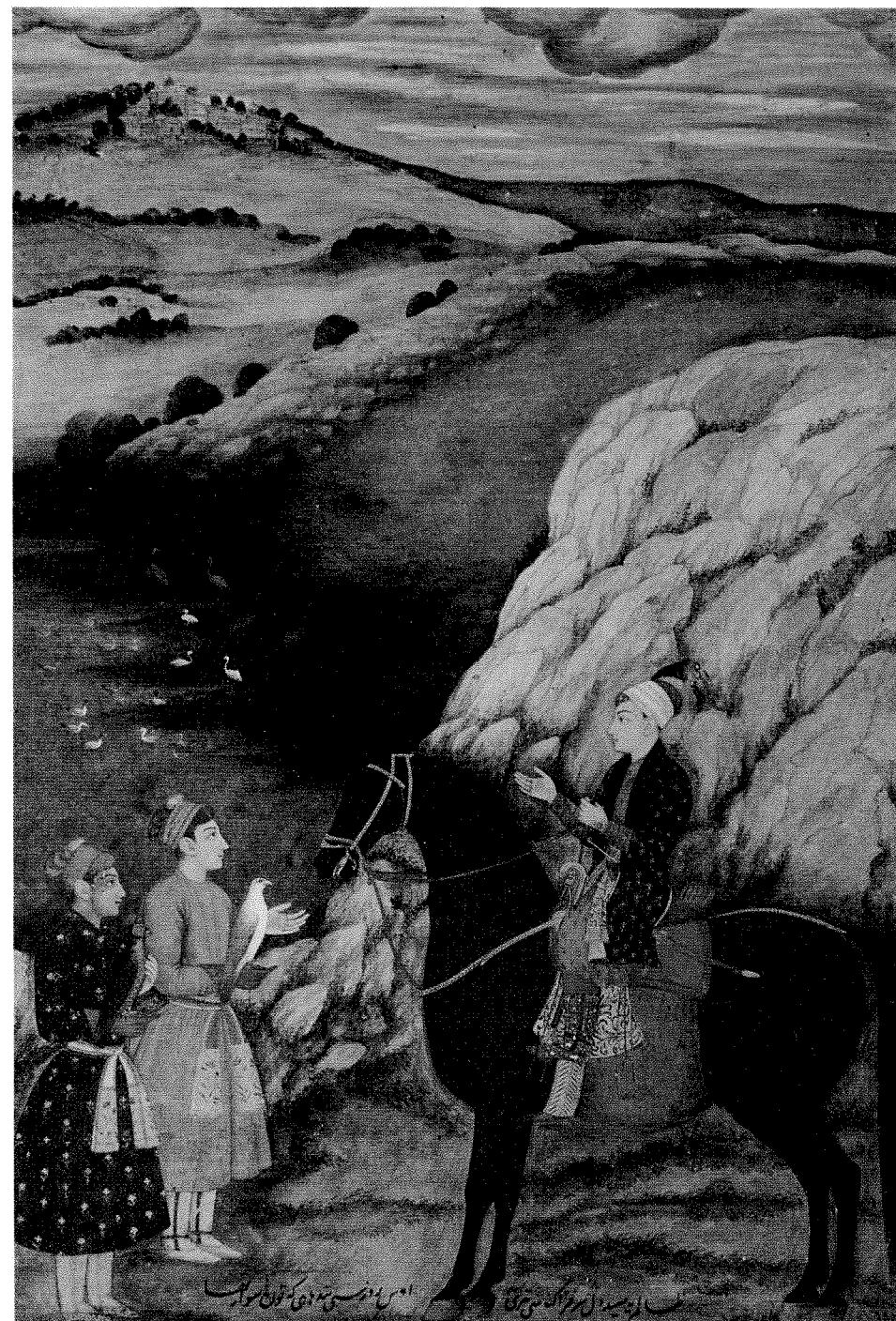


12
Prinze Aurangzeb attacking
an amok elephant



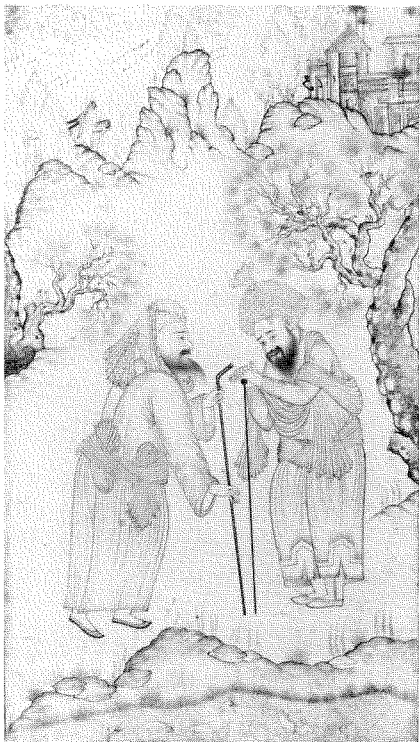
5 Capturing wild elephants

16 Bairam Khan on horseback shown with two courtiers



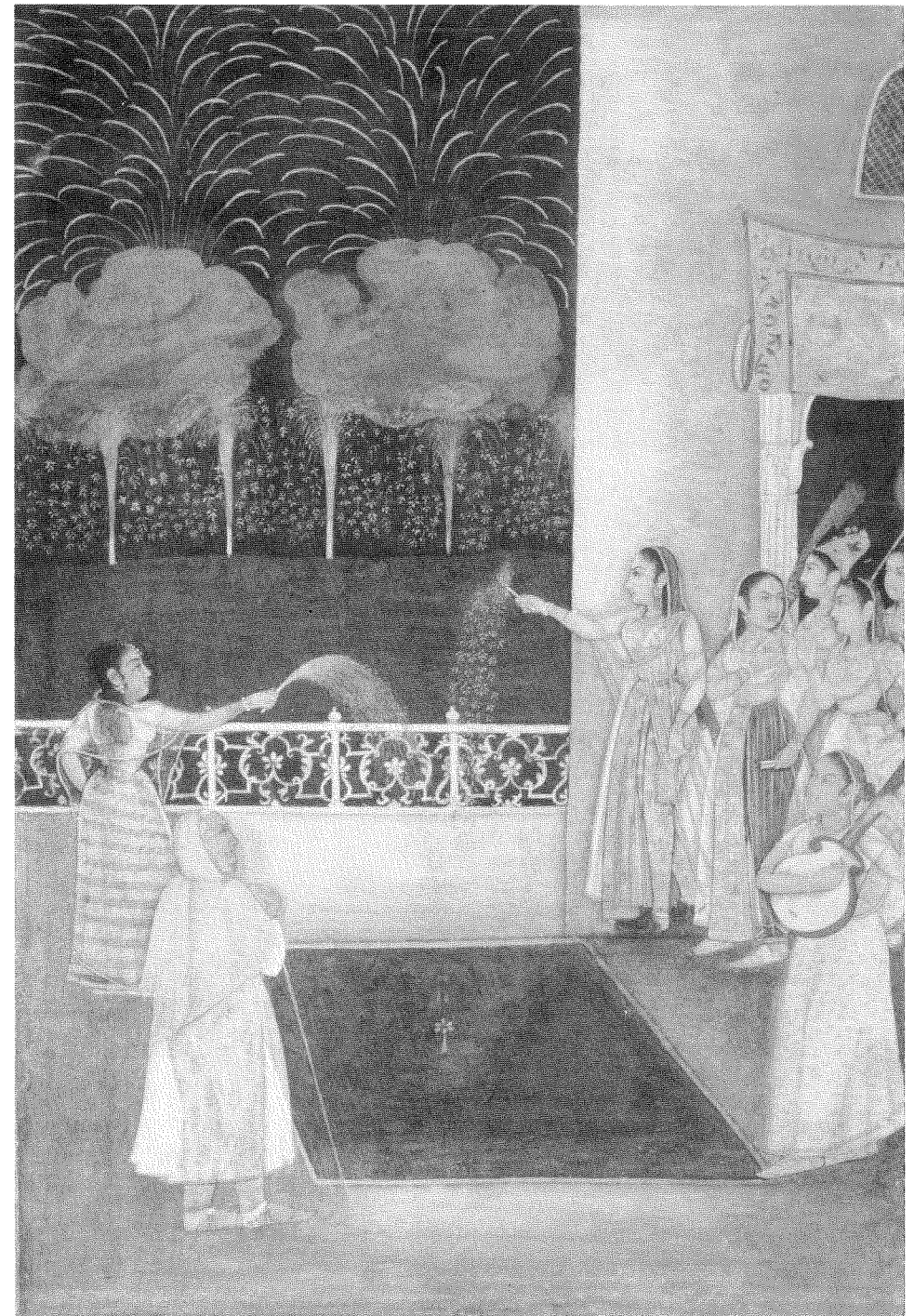


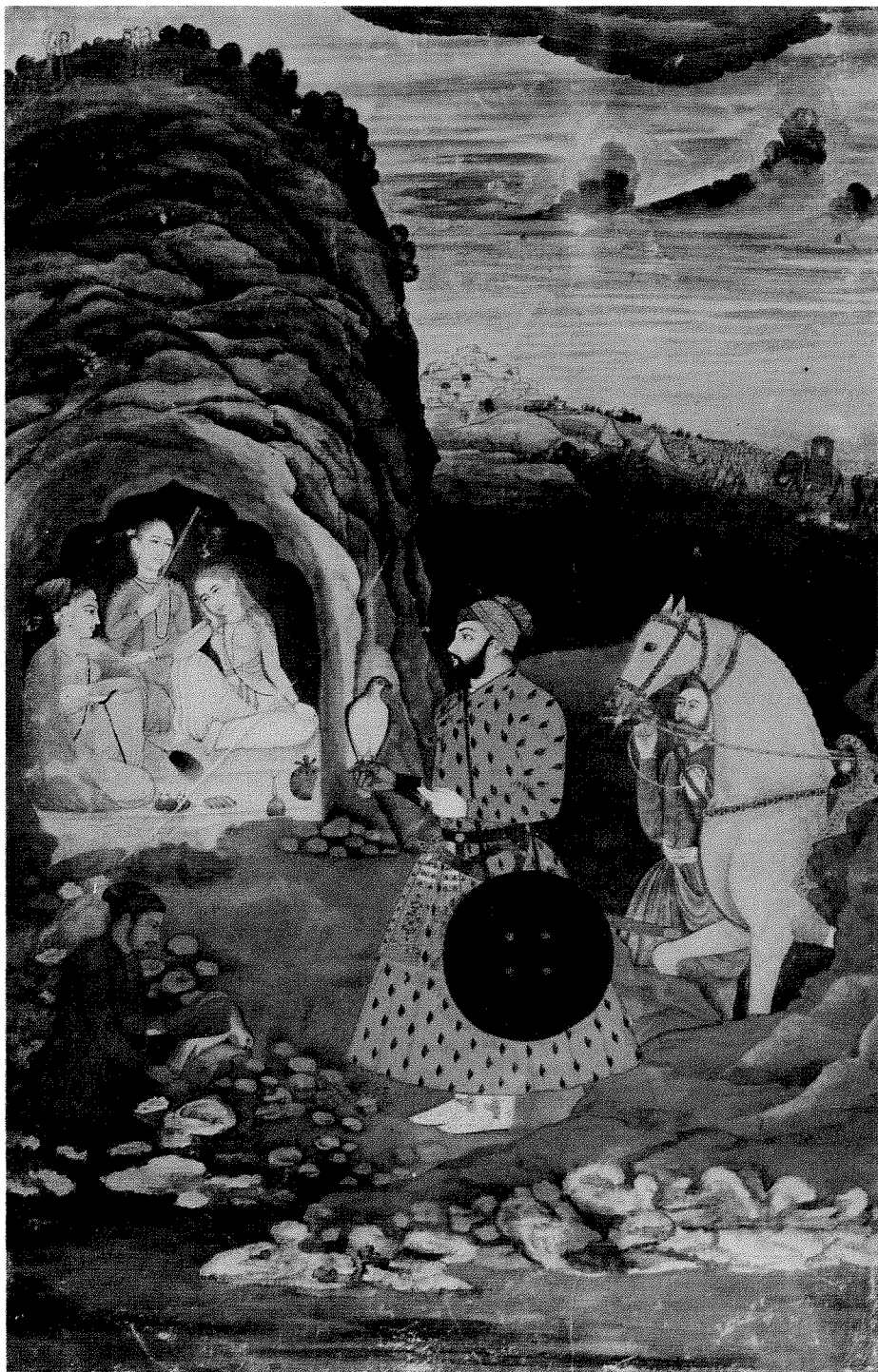
11
A prince, ladies and courtiers
in an encampment



13 Two elderly men in a landscape

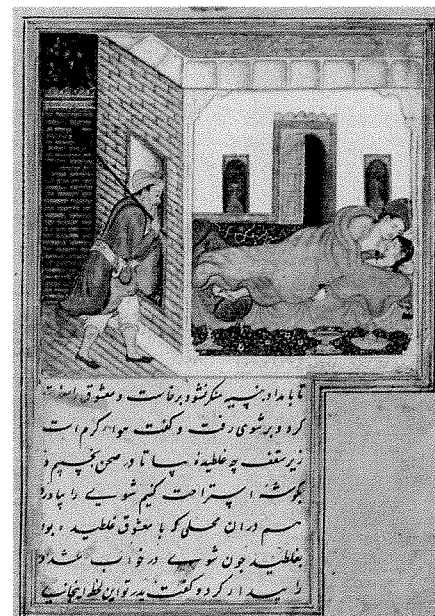
15 A group of women celebrating Diwali



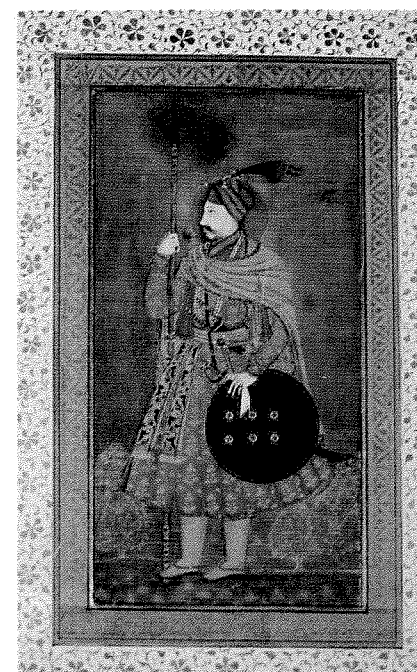


17 A prince encounters three Yohinis in a cave

1 A page from the Beatty Tuti-Nama



14
Abdullah Qutb Shah



7 Prince Parviz